

ROBERT J. WITTMAN
1ST DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2020

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Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Broadband
Department of Housing and Community Development
600 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Director Holmes:

I am writing in support of the Mathews, Middlesex, Caroline, and Lancaster Counties FY 2021 Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant application to expand high-speed broadband availability in the multiple counties in the First Congressional District through a partnership with Atlantic Broadband. Approval of this application would help meet a critical and mounting need to expand high-speed broadband service in the following counties

Rural Virginians know the value of high-speed broadband access. Broadband is vital to their economic progress, educational well-being, and a significant enhancement to telehealth expansion. In the First Congressional District of Virginia, as in other largely rural areas, economic incentives are needed to expand broadband access. The VATI program, has done an exceptional job of meeting that need. Support from VATI encourages private telecommunication providers to enlarge their physical plant and gives local government entities the ability to design the expansion plan that makes most sense for their community. This eases the financial burden associated with construction, extends service, and creates a win-win scenario for the participants and for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The four counties have collaborated with Atlantic Broadband to design a regional project that will make excellent use of the VATI grant program, providing broadband access to 1,500 currently unserved households. This application is efficiently designed, represents a first-rate use of state resources with a high-rate of non-state leverage, and will be synchronized by a regional entity experienced in managing these kinds of projects. I have also been advised that this application is the first of several phased projects, and that the counties are already planning for more growth and expansion. I'm sure you will be hearing more about this in future VATI rounds. This kind of forward-looking approach is what I hope all Virginia jurisdictions are aspiring to.

I am happy to offer my enthusiastic support for this well-planned regional effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. Wittman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress